

As a leader, how often do we find ourselves giving most of the attention to the best performers (“super stars”), and those with performance problems (“falling stars”), while taking for granted the vast majority of team members in between – the “middle stars”?

In *Leadership Courage*, best-selling authors David Cottrell and Eric Harvey address this topic (and many others) head-on. And they provide a wealth of information and strategies for ensuring that your team’s *faithful* majority don’t end up as the *forgotten* majority.

As the largest segment of the employee population, middle stars are the backbone of any team. Many are people who occasionally exhibit super-star behaviors but are inconsistent in their overall performance. They are important, “on the bubble” contributors – with the potential of becoming super stars ... or falling stars. Clearly, your ability to affect the performance of this group is critical to your success as a leader.

An excerpt from Leadership Courage (David Cottrell & Eric Harvey):

TIPS FOR LEADING "MIDDLE STARS"

1. **Build their confidence by increasing their responsibilities.** Start small and then increase as they achieve success. Sometimes employees are unsure of their ability to excel. Allow them to discover their “hidden” talents and encourage them to exceed their own expectations.
2. **Give frequent and accurate performance feedback.** Be specific. Clearly explain what is required for them to become super stars on the team.
3. **Teach them how to set goals** to keep their performance on track. And, by all means, hold them accountable for those goals.
4. **“Catch” them doing good things, and then praise them.** The more you focus on finding the good, the more good you will find ... and the more they will do! Reinforced behavior becomes repeated behavior.
5. **Hook them up with a super star for mentoring.** An effective mentoring program provides middle stars with positive role models and encourages super stars to be even more involved. That’s a good deal for everybody!
6. **Create rewards that appeal to their personal values.** Maybe you are rewarding team members in ways that you like to be rewarded – and it is not working for them. They will be happy to tell you what motivates them ... if you’ll just ask.

Often, it’s the “small things” you do that will inspire middle stars to become super stars – things like remembering facts about them and their family; asking their opinions on job-related matters; showing empathy when they’re facing a personal crisis; taking the time to listen to them; or merely doing something special when they need a boost. These are, by the way, things that should be done with and for ALL employees.